Body Blow To Activists: Whopping 82% Of Berlin's Voters Refused To Support Net Zero 2030 As Referendum Fails

https://pleiteticker.de/berliner-volksentscheid-ein-elitenprojekt-ist-gescheitert/

Berlin referendum: An elite project has failed

on 27 Mar 2023

The Latte-Macchiato faction has lost and is drowning in cynical accusations against the majority. The middle of society let the Berlin climate referendum fail. Liberals and conservatives, meanwhile, are justifiably celebrating a major victory against the Greens.

Journal, readlater, government, inflation:

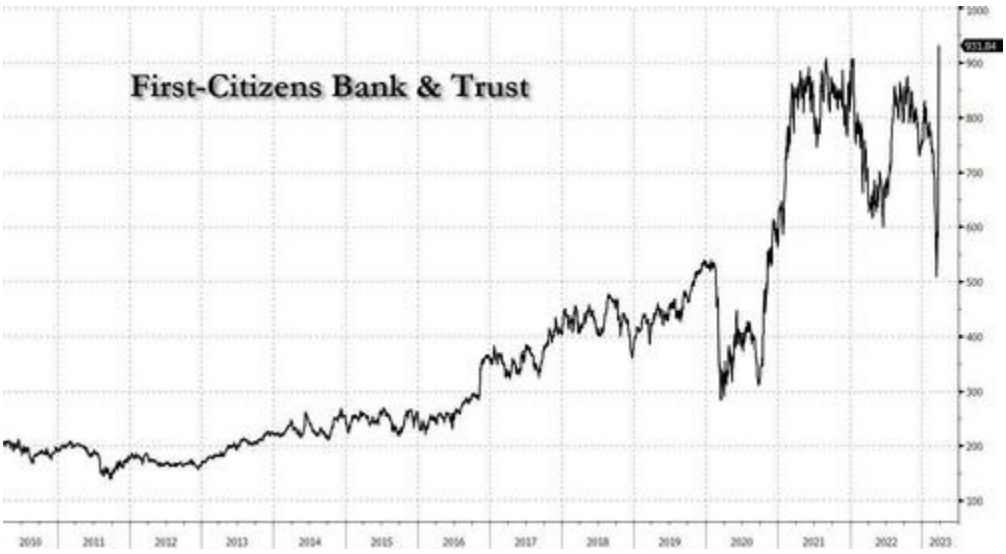
How The Collapse Of SVB Led To A $16 Billion Taxpayer-Funded Gift For One Bank

BY TYLER DURDEN

TUESDAY, MAR 28, 2023 - 03:40 PM

Something remarkable happened yesterday: just after midnight on Sunday night, the FDIC announced that a small bank which almost nobody had heard of before, First-Citizens Bank & Trust (FCNCA) would scoop up the remaining assets of the now defunct Silicon Valley Bank,which imploded on March 9 following a furious bank run, that saw $42BN in deposits drained in hours (and where **another $100 billion in deposits were about to be yanked on Friday,** which is why the FDIC stepped in and shuttered the bank before market open on Friday March 10)...

... and what happened next shocked everyone" FCNCA stock almost doubled, soaring to the highest on record.



But why would the value of the Raleigh, North Carolina-based First Citizens double in seconds if all it did buy assets which until just a few weeks ago were viewed as worthless.

Well, because they were ***not*** worthless. Yes, SIVB certainly had its sahre of massive MTM losses on its HTM book (consisting primarily of Mortgage Backed Securities), but it also had solid loans and it is these loans that First Citizens bought for a song.

As the following chart annotated by Wasteland Capital shows, the deal that First Citizens inked was nothing short of spectacular and explains how the small bank managed to double its stock price overnight. Here is what happened:

- In exchange for a discount bid of $16.5 billion, First Citizens acquired total assets of $110.1BN (including $35.3BN in cash), and $93.6BN in liabilities, including $56.5BN in deposits and $34.6BN in assumed borrowings.

- More importantly, none of the $90BN in underwater HTM "investment securities" that sparked the crisis in the first place were acquired; no the US taxpayers got to keep those courtesy of the FDIC.
- There's more: to further sweeten the deal, the FDIC pledged even more taxpayer funds to "incentivize" First Citizens not to walk away, and it did so by signing a five-year loss share agreement according to which the FDIC will reimburse First Cititzens for 50% of losses on commercial loans in excess of $5 billion.

Bottom line: virtually no risk - and what little risk is left after acquiring this portfolio of deeply discounted loans is shared 50-50 with US taxpayers - and only upside.

And how much did this sweet taxpayer-funded deal cost First Citizens? Why a "whopping" $500 million... when when netting out the actual asset bid of $16.5 billion means that First Citizens "paid" a negative $16 billion. Confused by the double negative? Here's the bottom line: courtesy of US taxpayers (who ended up getting stuffed with the toxic garbage on Silicon Valley Bank's balance sheet), **First Citizens got $16 billion (and arguably much more) in assets for free.** What's more, FCNCA not only got $16BN in assets for free, but the combination of the two banks creates a $143 billion loan portfolio and turns the little-known North Carolina bank into one of the country’s largest lenders to the venture capital and private equity industries. It also means **First Citizens will**

now be one of the top 15 US banks, with more assets than the likes of Morgan Stanley or American Express Co., according to Federal Reserve data!

One can see why the bank's market cap doubled instantly (and has a lot more to go once the bank crisis fizzles, once rates are cut and once loan prices resume their climb).

To be sure, one could argue if this was such a sweetheart deal for First Citizens, why did other banks not join the bidding process. The answer to that has to do with the unique expertise of the bank's CEO Frank B. Holding Jr., who has now scooped up at least a dozen failed banks since 2008.

“Let me say that this acquisition is compelling financially, strategically and operationally,” Holding, the 61-year-old chief executive officer of First Citizens and one of its largest individual shareholders, told analysts on a conference call on Monday. First Citizens’ stock soared after the announcement. “It is also a great illustration of regulators and banks working together to protect depositors.”

Alternatively, it is a great illustration of how clueless government regulators use taxpayer funds to backstop deals that make billionaires even richer and while Elizabeth Warren still hasn't figured out what happened here, she "native American" will sooner or later, at which point we will get countless kangaroo court hearings seeking an explanation from the FDIC how this wealth transfer was allowed to happen.

And while we wait, here is a snapshot of First Citizens' unique history courtesy of Bloomberg:

First Citizens got its start with $10,000 in capital as the Bank of Smithfield in 1898, primarily serving North Carolina’s Johnston County. In 1935, Frank Holding’s grandfather R.P. Holding took over as president and chairman, leading the company until his death in the 1950s.

At that point, leadership of the bank transferred to his three sons, Robert Holding, Lewis R. Holding and Frank B. Holding. In the 1970s, the firm moved its headquarters to Raleigh as assets surpassed $1 billion for the first time, according to the company’s website.

It wasn’t until 1994 that First Citizens began opening branches outside its home state after acquiring a bank in West Virginia. A few years later, the company added a federal thrift subsidiary, allowing it to expand further across the country.

Frank B. Holding Jr. was named CEO of First Citizens in 2008, then chairman the following year, at the height of the global financial crisis. A handful of other bank executives – including Vice Chairman Hope Holding Bryant and President Peter Bristow – are also Holding family members.

“He sort of does look like the family banker,” said Lawrence Baxter, a Duke University School of Law professor who once was a First Citizens customer himself and regularly sees Holding in ads that are part of the bank’s PBS North Carolina sponsorship.

Family banker or not, Holding certainly is experienced in quickly assessing and scooping up distressed assets: since the global financial crisis, First Citizens has acquired lenders in a series of deals from Washington state to Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

“First Citizens has a history of troubled banks,” said Herman Chan, an analyst with Bloomberg Intelligence. **“It’s a strategy to grow the bank when times are difficult — to conduct M&A at advantageous prices."**

Like now.

Growth has come not only from failed-bank deals though: First Citizens last year completed the acquisition of the formerly high-profile CIT Group in a deal valued at more than $2 billion.

“In the long run, what you’ll get is more — more services, more ways to manage your money, more places to find us,” Holding told customers in a video announcing the takeover. “We’re not just making a bigger bank, we’re making an even better bank.”

The moves have meant First Citizens is now a national player, with more than 500 branches and private-banking offices spread across states as far away from its headquarters as Hawaii. With more than 10,000 employees, the lender offers the traditional businesses of banking to individual consumers and companies, and is also one of the largest lenders to the rail industry — even owning a fleet of rail cars and locomotives that it leases to railroads and shippers.

* * *

While nowhere near close to Monday's multi-billion gift, Frank Holding had already taken advantage of SVB’s collapse by joining other regional bank executives in snapping up shares of their companies. He spent $260,000 buying up First Citizens stock in early March for $650 a share, 30% below the company’s current share price of $910.

Some younger members of the Holding family are already working for the bank. Perry Bailey, Frank’s daughter, earned $224,082 working at First Citizens last year, while her cousin and Frank’s nephew John Patrick Connell pocketed $105,116 during the same period, according to regulatory disclosures.

Not surprisingly, Holding and his relatives have became part of the world’s ultra-rich through their banking business, becoming a billionaire finance dynasty split across at least five branches.

Like other billionaire dynasties, such as the Murdochs, the family has maintained a tight grip on the direction of their major asset, even though they don’t hold a

majority of its equity, by employing a dual-class share structure. Frank Holding and his relatives hold Class B shares with 16 voting rights each, compared with the single vote for each of the Class A shares the banking dynasty also holds, and they've passed down their wealth generation to generation by shifting stock to scores of trusts.

Frank Holding and relatives listed as First Citizens shareholders oversee a stake worth more than $1.7 billion in First Citizens after the company's shares surged 54% on Monday, erasing their sudden wealth slump from SVB's collapse, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. They've also received at least $35 million through dividends and share sales over the past four decades and diversified their fortunes into commercial real estate, farming and philanthropy.

And now, courtesy of the SIVB collapse, they are about to become even richer.

Regulators Blame Friday's Deutsche Bank Crash On Single CDS Trade

BY TYLER DURDEN
TUESDAY, MAR 28, 2023 - 12:15 PM

Last Friday, what was already a bad global banking crisis following the implosion of the US regional banking sector and the collapse of Credit Suisse last weekend, turned much worse when as we showed at the time, the CDS of Deutsche Bank blew out to levels wider than those hit during the covid crash...

... and sparking another global market rout amid growing fears that the largest European bank could fail next.

The CDS - and stock - rout prompted a barrage of verbal defense by everyone from Wall Street analysts (working for other banks and thus who are thus quite incentivized, and conflicted, in preventing a bank crash that would dwarf Lehman) and European politicians (who would be on the hook for the multi-billion bailout and/or depression should DB fail), and for now this has succeeded with both DB stock and CDS stabilizing in the past few days. Meanwhile, realizing they must quickly bolt down all the "weakest links" moments ago Bloomberg reported that **regulators are taking a page out of the post-Lehman playbook and as part of the scapegoating campaign which looks at *everyone but those responsible*, are "singling out a trade on Deutsche Bank AG's credit default swaps that they suspect fueled a global selloff on Friday."**

The trade in question, according to Bloomberg sources, represents a laughable €5 million ($5.4 million) bet on swaps tied to the German bank's junior debt, which also happens to be the smallest tradable denomination and blaming the near collapse on DB on one single CDS trade is equivalent to blaming the May 2010 flash crash on two-bit *stay-at-home daytrader* Navinder Sarao (which, come to think of it, is precisely what happened so we aren't that shocked). And to frontrun the perpetual mockery from those whoa actually know how the CDS

market works, BBG was quick to note that CDS contracts can be illiquid, "so a single bet can trigger big moves." Yes it can... and a big move will trigger even bigger counter moves, assuming there is anyone in the market with any conviction. It is the fact that nobody was willing to take the other side on the smallest possible short risk bet targeting DB's junior debt, that speaks volumes about this idiotic "explanation" for why DB almost went down last Friday.

Of course, if one is dumb enough to believe that one single, solitary trade can spark a marketwide avalanche, then what happens next is obvious:

The suspected knock-on effect was a rout that sent banking stocks tumbling, government bonds higher and CDS prices for lenders soaring, trimming about €1.6 billion off Deutsche Bank’s market cap and more than €30 billion off an index that tracks European banking stocks.

So yeah, tens of billions in value wiped out because of literally the smallest possible CDS increment one can trade. Good narrative-shaping there, guys.

There is a reason why regulators are scrambling to pin the blame on some tiny family office that was hoping to hedge against a DB collapse: European banks and their regulators have sought to underline that they have a close watch on risks — including rising rates — and that the industry is on a sound footing. Events last Friday showed just how clueless Europe's regulators are. One could say they are almost as clueless as their US peers who allowed the regional bank crisis to reach a level where nobody knows what is safe anymore.

Amid the unwanted attention, German lender published a presentation on Monday that cited its “well diversified portfolio” of deposits, a key focus for investors following the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank. Deutsche Bank and the broader index rebounded on Monday, erasing some of Friday’s losses.

So who gets to be the Nav Sarao of this bank crisis? We don't know yet, because according to BBG, "it’s unclear who placed the relevant trades or why they did it." Hilariously, even BBG admits that this wasn't some premeditated attempt by some rookie to crash the banking system, but rather concedes that "s**ome data point to the trades being for hedging purposes, said one of the people."**

And just in case the laughter isn't loud enough yet, the report goes on to note that "there’s also a trade on Deutsche Bank’s five-year, senior CDS contracts executed on Thursday that attracted scrutiny, one of the people said."

Oh, so it wasn't one CDS trade... it was two. **Well, congrats to DB for surviving not one but two short trades!**

The search for triggers underscores a general lack of transparency in the asset class, which Andrea Enria, the European Central Bank’s top oversight official, flagged on Tuesday. He also called for global financial regulators to take a closer look at the CDS market.

“There are markets like the single name CDS market which are very opaque, very shallow, very illiquid,” Enria said at a conference hosted by German newspaper Handelsblatt. “With a few millions, you can move the CDS spreads” of a major bank “and contaminate also stock prices and possibly also deposit outflows,” he said, without naming any banks.

And just like in 2008, the demonization of CDS traders has begun. Unfortunately, it also means that the crisis is only just starting, and before it is done, plain vanilla stock shorts will also be thrown under the bus and shorting itself will be prohibited.

Journal, government: Zelensky Invites China's Xi To Visit Ukraine As US Rebuffs 'Alternate' Peace Plan

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 29, 2023 - 06:20 PM

Coming on the heels of Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow where he met with Vladimir Putin last week, Ukraine's Zelensky has formally invited the Chinese leader to visit Ukraine soon, according to his remarks in a newly published Associated Press interview.

"We are ready to see him here," Zelensky said. "**I want to speak with him**. I had contact with him before full-scale war. But during all this year, more than one year, I didn’t have."

Zelensky initially expressed openness in comments earlier this month given in reaction to Beijing's 12-point peace plan: "I think some of the Chinese proposals respect international law, and **I think we can work on it with China**," he said at the time.

Just before Xi had arrived in Moscow on March 20, *The Wall Street Journal* had cited sources as saying there would be a phone call between Xi and Zelensky, but that doesn't appear to have ever materialized.

Zelensky has since invited China to sign on to a 'Ukraine formula' for peace, which wouldn't be conditioned on any territorial concessions. Zelensky has vowed to never concede an inch, but has since **shown some degree of doubt over how his forces are faring in the battlefield**, particularly in Bakhmut. Zelensky described that the capture of Bakhmut will mean that **Putin will smell weakness**. According to the Ukrainian leader's words this week:

*Speaking with The Associated Press, Zelenskyy said that if Bakhmut were to fall, Putin could **"sell this victory to the West, to his society, to China, to Iran,"** as leverage to push for a ceasefire deal that would see Ukraine agree to give up territory.*

This, alongside the potential for Xi and Zelensky to hold direct talks, is worrying the Biden administration, with Ukrainian officials in the meantime seeking to 'assure' Washington of Kiev's steadfastness, as *Newsweek* in a Wednesday report lays out:

*The top diplomats of Ukraine and the United States on Tuesday **jointly cautioned against giving any weight to alternate peace plans** that seek a cease-fire without the full withdrawal of invading Russian forces, in **a subtle rebuff of a recent proposal by China**.*

"Ill-advised concessions to the aggressor would only encourage Russia to intensify its attacks on democracy, giving it time to rebuild its military capabilities and resume the armed offensive against Ukraine," Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's foreign minister, said at a virtual forum hosted by the U.S. State Department.

Publicly, Kyiv and Moscow have been cautiously receptive to China's 12-point position paper, which reaffirms the "territorial integrity of all countries" without directly mentioning Ukraine, references "legitimate security interests" in deference to Russia, and calls for a quick end to hostilities on the ground.

But if Russian forces do achieve a definitive victory in Bakhmut any time soon, this could tip the scales in favor of Ukraine taking the Chinese peace plan more seriously.

As for Zelensky's invitation for Xi to visit, on Wednesday Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said she has no information on whether an invitation had been received by Beijing, or whether the Chinese president would accept it.

War, Erdogan, energy:

Turkey Halts 450Kb/d In Oil Output Via Kirkuk-Ceyhan Pipeline Amid Dispute With Iraq

Iraq was forced to halt around 450,000 barrels per day of crude exports, or half a percent of global oil supply, from the Kurdistan region (KRI) on Saturday through a pipeline that runs from its northern Kirkuk oil fields to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, Reuters reported.

Turkey stopped pumping Iraqi crude from the pipeline after Iraq won an arbitration case in which it said Turkey had violated a joint agreement by allowing the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to export oil to Ceyhan without Baghdad's consent.

Iraq's government said it's up to Kurdistan to break the oil deadlock. "The ball now is the Kurds' court," Asim Jihad, a spokesman for Iraq's Federal Ministry of Oil, said in an interview.

Meanwhile, oil firms operating in the KRI are being forced to halt output or move production into storage, which many say will reach capacity within days, as talks drag between Turkey, Baghdad and the KRG to resume exports.

Norwegian oil firm DNO said on Wednesday it had begun shutting down production at its Tawke and Peshkabir fields, where production averaged 107,000 barrels per day (bpd) last year. This represents a quarter of total Kurdish region exports, DNO said.

Genel Energy, a partner in the fields, said: *"Peshkabir production was halted last night and plans drawn up to conduct deferred maintenance. Tawke production shutdown has started but will take an additional day or so."* Genel Energy's remaining assets in KRI continue to flow into storage, the firm said. Production from its Sarta field can flow into storage until the end of the week, while tanks can hold production from Taq Taq until around April 21, a company spokesperson said on Wednesday. The fields produced a respective 4,710 bpd and 4,490 bpd last year.

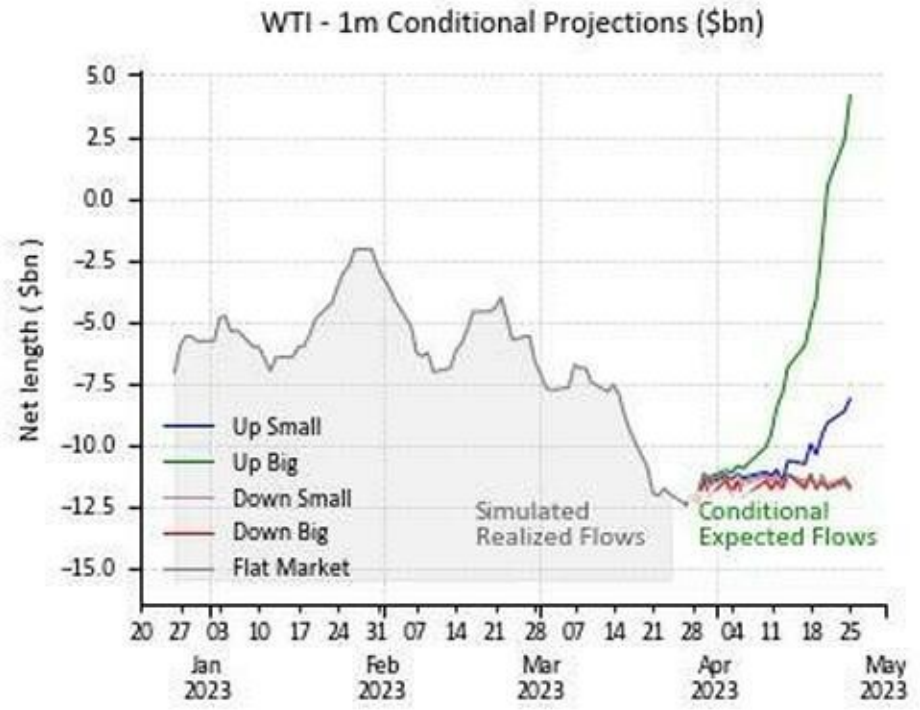
Canada-based Forza Petroleum, formerly Oryx Petroleum Corp, was forced to shut in production earlier this week from the 14,500 bpd Hawler license, which produced an average 13,700 bpd in January and February.

Gulf Keystone has reduced production at the Shaikan oil field, which previously produced around 55,000 bpd, and said on Monday it would suspend production after a few days. The company declined to comment on current production levels.

Dallas-based HKN Energy, which operates the Sarsang block, said on Monday it would shut in operations "within a week if no resolution is reached" as its storage facilities approach capacity. The block produced 43,048 bpd in the fourth quarter of last year.

In response, the White House - which has been paranoid about even one drop of oil not hitting the global market on time - is pushing Iraq and Turkey to restart exports of crude oil and to resolve a dispute with Kurdish authorities as soon as possible, because the last thing Biden needs in addition to a bank crisis and deposit runs is another surge in gasoline prices.

And while the Turkey-Iraq spat has taken off almost half a million barrels off the market, and pushed the price of Brent higher, the question is how long before CTAs - which are massively short oil - start to cover. As Goldman calcualted yesterday, "systematic positioning here leans short (went from short $10bn in energy before Feb 22 to now being short $30bn). Cot data re-affirming the above, with positioning coming in from late Feb/early-March highs." A condition projection of CTA activity in oil shows massive buying in the coming weeks should the price of oil turn higher, creating a positive feedback loop of more buying and more short covering.



BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 29, 2023 - 07:40 PM

As Goldman noted overnight, the bank had received quite a few inbound client inquiries as to what may be behind the recent jump in crude oil prices which after tumbling to the lowest level since 2021 have rebounded back to almost $80/bbl. One answer may come from the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region of northern Iraq, where producers have shut in or reduced output at several oilfields following a halt to the northern export pipeline, company statements showed, with more outages on the horizon.

Journal, markets, inflation: nice window into market sentiment with RH CEO earnings call

"It's Not Rocket Science" - RH CEO Warns "This Is Not Normal, This Is Dangerous"

BY TYLER DURDEN
THURSDAY, MAR 30, 2023 - 01:21 PM

RH shares are down around 5% in the pre-market as the upscale home furnishings company issued **weaker-than-expected full-year guidance for FY23**...

According to the letter to shareholders, business conditions for RH are anticipated to remain challenging for the "next several quarters" and maybe even longer due to a rapidly weakening housing market, the uncertainty caused by the recent banking crisis, lapping of COVID-19 driven sales and backlog reductions.

"..., inflation that was thought to be “transitory” is now deemed “persistent” by the Federal Reserve, resulting in a record rise in interest rates triggering a dramatic decline of the housing market, with luxury homes sales down 45% in the most recent quarter versus a year ago. ***Add to that an underperforming stock market, and a banking crisis no one saw coming and the data***

points to business in our sector likely getting worse before it gets better,"

But, as always, it's what RH CEO Gary Friedman had to say during the earnings call that caught most analysts' ears...

In Q3 of last year, he jabbed at policymakers: ***"Yellen Was Massively Blind"*** *- RH CEO Routs 'Slow & Wrong' Policymakers For Making Things Worse"*

In Q4 of last year, he warned about the economy: ***"There Is No Soft Landing"*** *- RH CEO Warns Housing Market "Looks More Like A Crash-Landing"*

And now, in Q1, the comfortably outspoken Friedman turns up the threat amplifier to '11'...

As the Q&A began, a question about a lower margin outlook prompted this:

"It's not rocket science to know this is a really bad time," according to a transcript from Bloomberg.

"The fact is, we've been in a massive housing recession for the past year," Friedman continued.

"The data points to business in our sector likely getting worse before it gets better," Friedman said, signaling additional headwinds from bank credit contraction ahead.

"I've been on the planet for long enough to know this is not normal, and this is dangerous," he said.

He worries about the consumer (which is important given the high-end nature of his company's products might suggest some insulation from that threat)...

"...the unsettling feeling as being a person on a Saturday afternoon is watching Warriors basketball game at the news cut to align formed around your local bank while the bank was sending hourly e-mails trying to tell you that they committed to serving you. ***It's very unsettling...****"*

And more pointedly, he exclaimed that***:***

"Anybody that thinks it's not a big deal, the three banks went down... is living in a -- with a euphoric view of the world."

Finally, Friedman offered some advice to policymakers:

"Just land the plane on the other side, whether it's hard, whether it's bumpy," *Friedman said.*

"Just don't completely crash. A complete crash would look like the '70s and the '80s. That will take over a decade to recover from."

Subtle, and scary, as ever... but hey, just keep listening to the MSM and the Biden admin about how strong the consumer is... (remember how 'sound' the US financial system was a month ago too?)

Stats: Abandoned 267-Foot Superyacht In Caribbean Possibly Heading To Auction

BY TYLER DURDEN
FRIDAY, MAR 31, 2023 - 06:45 AM

An abandoned 267-foot superyacht, purportedly owned by a Russian billionaire, has been anchored at a Caribbean marina for the past year. After some deliberation, the Antigua and Barbuda government plans to sell the vessel at auction to pay for mounting docking fees.

Antigua Observer Newspaper reports the $81 million superyacht "Alfa Nero" is reportedly owned by sanctions-hit oligarch Andrey Guryev. The vessel has been docked in the Caribbean since Russia invaded Ukraine.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne said the vessel is uninsured, posing a risk to other yachts in Falmouth Harbour.

"Now, this is a vessel that could be unmanned if the government does intervene. Anything could go wrong. Maybe some of the doors could open and start to take on water and it sinks," Browne said*.*

He continued:

"There could be a fire. In fact, I am told the insurance of the marina could be affected because we have an uninsured vessel sitting in the marina and is a risk to other boats.

"We are talking about billions of dollars of assets in that harbour. And you can imagine if that vessel was to catch fire what will happen.

"Think about the environmental impact, not only in terms of the oil spill and so on, but let us take into consideration that, as it stands now, the sewage system is not working. So, they're dumping sewage in the water. And that's one of the areas that we draw water from for the plant. So this issue is a significant threat."

Browne added:

"The yachting sector contributes more to our economy than even the cruise tourism sector. Understand the reputational damage if we fail to act and we end up with a major catastrophe."

The mystery of who exactly owns the yacht continues... Blomberg reached out to Guryev's lawyers, who said:

"As we have informed the Antiguan authorities, Mr. Guryev neither owns nor controls the Alfa Nero and has simply used the vessel from time to time under commercial charter since 2014."

Antigua Port Manager Darwin Telemaque said if no one claims the vessel by March 31, he will be forced to send it to the auction block shortly after.

"We're Going To See A Lot Of Bankruptcies": Former Home Depot CEO Warns

BY TYLER DURDEN
MONDAY, APR 17, 2023 - 09:20 PM

Authored by Naveen Anthrapully via The Epoch Times,

Bob Nardelli, the former CEO of Home Depot, is warning about more bankruptcies hitting the U.S. economy, and blames lawmakers for their delay in coming to terms regarding the country's debt ceiling.

*"**I think we're going to see a lot of bankruptcies.** Like Bed, Bath, and Beyond. We got Walmart not only laying people off but closing stores. We got Accenture laying people off. We got Amazon closing distribution centers. So, **I think there's a tremendous-mixed message,**" Nardelli said in an April 14 interview with Fox.*

At present, the "complexity" of the American economy is "different than anything I have seen in my 52 years."

Nardelli also blamed Congress' inability to work together to raise the U.S. debt limit as creating a burden on businesses, saying that he is "definitely worried" about the situation.

Washington State House Approves Bill Authorizing Hiding Of Children Seeking Transgender Medical Intervention From Parents

Apr 17, 2023

On April 12, House lawmakers debated Senate Bill 5599 (pdf), which creates an exemption for the state that grants it the right to not be required to notify parents of minors who have left their homes because their parents wouldn't let them pursue gender transition medical procedures.

In a video statement after the vote, Republican state **Rep. Chris Corry said the bill "erodes parental rights in the state of Washington."**

"Essentially what the bill would do would be if a child left a parents' home for certain medical care and went to a shelter or host family, **that shelter or host family would not be required to notify the parents of their child's whereabouts**," Corry said. "**This is obviously a fundamental violation of parental rights** and something that's deeply concerning for parents across Washington state."

Censorship, government:

Facebook Censors Seymour Hersh's Article About US Involvement In Nord Stream Pipeline Attack

Authored by Paul Joseph Watson via Summit News, 20 April, 2023

Facebook is censoring Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh's story about US involvement in the destruction of Russia's Nord Stream pipelines using a 'fact checker' with links to the Norwegian government in what represents a clear conflict of interest.

New Bill Would Classify Conservative Speech As 'Domestic Violence Extremism'

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 08, 2023 - 07:20 PM

Authored by Dmytro "Henry" Aleksandrov via Headline USA,

Proposed legislation that would classify conservative free speech as domestic terrorism is being called "the most dangerous bill in legislative history."

One of the infamous J6 violent rioters kneels in front of the Washington Monument. / PHOTO: AP

Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson is aggressively pushing legislation that would establish a 13-member panel to determine what constitutes disinformation and misinformation rising to the level of "domestic violence extremism," according to The Center Square. T**he panel would also collect data on incidents of their pickings of domestic violent extremism and classify noncriminal activities or speech as such.**

Free speech advocates blasted the bill for targeting conservatives and criminalizing anyone who expresses an opinion that runs counter to a regime-approved narrative.

"This commission is specifically designed to target conservatives and quash any government opposition, which is why the legislation purposefully ignores Antifa and Black Lives Matter extremists. Indeed, it expressly supports those tactics," wrote Seattle KTTH talk-show host Jason Rantz, who called it "the most dangerous bill in legislative history."

According to Rantz's interpretation of comments that AG Ferguson made in a January interview with PBS, the idea behind the bill is to "take preemptive measures to stop actual domestic terrorist acts through community intervention," such as compelling people identified as "extremists" to undergo counseling.

"Let's engage in prevention, of getting folks — avoiding them being radicalized in the first place. If somebody is radicalized and wants removal, move away from that, how can we help them with counseling, for example, to get them away from that ideology?" Ferguson told PBS host Laura Barrón-López.

"**So, looking at from a more holistic standpoint, we think, addresses prevention, addresses helping folks who've been radicalized and take a more holistic view of this to address what is a huge challenge, not just in Washington state, but all across the country.**"

However, Rantz noted that the bill goes far beyond just that goal.

"**They say this is about violence, but it's not about violence. It's actually about speech,**" he told Fox News on Friday.

“We already have laws on the books that very clearly address violence. What they’re trying to do with this commission is create what they’re calling a ‘public health approach’ to some of these ideologies.”

Rantz also explained that the commission could see the opposition to critical race theory, mask mandates and radical gender ideology connected to “white supremacy.”

“They are singularly focused on the Right,” Rantz said. “What this commission will end up doing is… recommending legislation that could not only lead to imprisoning people for having certain kinds of political positions, but also forcing them into counseling.”

Politico Surrenders To Woke Tantrum By Millennial Staffers, Now Has 'Banned Words' List

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 08, 2023 - 07:25 PM

Progressive millennials within *Politico* threw a giant temper tantrum, and got their way.

Banned words

Several weeks after the transgender sermon, *Politico* appointed a new standards editor to oversee editorial content - former White House correspondent Anita Kumar. Under her, **a new 2022 style guide was implemented** which includes a list of 'noninclusive' words deemed verboten. Via *The Spectator:*

-
  - *Mankind*
  - *Man-made*
  - *Manhunt*
  - *Crack the whip:* unacceptable because of origins in slavery
  - *Waiter* or *waitress: server* should be used instead
  - *Biological gender*, *biological sex*, *biological woman*, *biological female*, *biological man*, or *biological male*
  - *Illegal immigrant* or *illegal alien*
  - *Cake walk:* "originated during slavery" and thus perpetuates "racist motifs"
  - In reference to illegal migration: *onslaught*, *tidal wave*, *flood*, *inundation*, *surge*, *invasion*, *army*, *march*, *sneak* and *stealth*
  - *Anchor baby*
  - *Chain migration*: this is a term used by "immigration hard-liners"
  - *Peanut gallery:* "the cheapest seats often occupied by Black people and people with low incomes"
  - *Third-world countries:* too "derogatory"

The guide also **warns reporters not to say a transgender individual 'identifies' as a certain gender**, or to describe the border crisis as a 'crisis' because "while the sharp increase in the arrival of unaccompanied minors is a problem for border officials, a political challenge for the Biden administration and a dire situation for many migrants who make the journey, it does not fit the dictionary definition of a crisis."

Exploring The Five Best US Cities For Bitcoin Enthusiasts

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 08, 2023 - 08:40 PM

Authored by Jenna Hall via BitcoinMagazine.com,

Tech, ai, markets: **Billionaire Ken Griffin Negotiating ChatGPT License For Citadel Empire**

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 08, 2023 - 06:20 PM

Citadel CEO Ken Griffin has taken a different approach from Wall Street banks, who have banned using artificial intelligence chatbots in their offices. Instead, Griffin is currently in the process of obtaining a company-wide license to utilize OpenAI's ChatGPT tool.

"This branch of technology has real impact on our business," Griffin told Bloomberg in an interview on Tuesday in sunny Palm Beach, Florida. "Everything from helping our developers write better code to translating software between languages to analyze various types of information that we analyze in the ordinary course of our business," he added.

Griffin, who heads the South Florida hedge fund Citadel and capital-markets firm Citadel Securities, touted the chatbot as the "fastest-growing consumer application in the history of the internet." He emphasized: "I'm really excited to see how this changes the world."

Griffin views ChatGPT as a way to streamline tasks for employees, enabling them to be more productive. "It will take an enormous amount of work that's done today by people, and do it in a distinctly different, highly automated, efficient way," he said.

Last year was a banner year for both of Griffin's companies, with Citadel Securities raking in revenue of $7.5 billion and becoming the largest trading unit

in the US. Similarly, Griffin's flagship hedge fund recorded a 38% surge due to strong performances in equities and commodities.

The billionaire founder is setting a precedent for the industry at a time when many Wall Street banks, such as Bank of America Corp., Citigroup Inc., Deutsche Bank AG, Goldman Sachs Group Inc., and Wells Fargo & Co., have prohibited ChatGPT from the office.

Markets, inflation, government:

The 2-Year Yields 5%... So What?

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 08, 2023 - 04:29 PM

By Peter Tchir of Academy Securities

The 2-Year Yields 5% - So What

Away from zero day to expiration options (0DTE), everyone in the market (and beyond) seems fixated on 2-year yields. There are about 100 iterations of the following question:

Shouldn't I just put my money into 2-year treasuries? They are yielding 5%, after all?

Where to invest on the yield curve is always on my mind, but suddenly everyone seems to be talking about the 2-year. Not just bond "geeks" but mom and pop investors. Not just about where on the yield curve, but as part of every asset allocation conversation. Bob Pisani and I spoke last night for this CNBC piece on "tech and quality stocks" and he also mentioned he was being inundated with calls, from unlikely corners about the investment merits of the 2-year Treasury.

Vaccine, journal, another example of the msm playing into the anti-vax sentiment, something that could lead to a major culture clash in the event of a new pandemic wave, especially if it is much more pronounced than t he last. They will say the antivaxxer put everybody in the danger. They told you to take off your masks, not take vaccines; they said nobody died! And then it will be so easy to push forward whatever agenda that they may have on the table. Just food for thought, of course. Watch: Rand Paul Accuses Fauci

Of "Elaborate Cover-Up" Of COVID Lab Leak

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 08, 2023 - 02:25 PM

Authored by Steve Watson via Summit News,

Senator Rand Paul asserted Tuesday that Anthony Fauci, along with other scientists working with him at the National Institutes Of Health engaged in an "elaborate cover-up" of the lab origin of the coronavirus pandemic in order to hide their own involvement.

"The reason Dr. Fauci didn't want any attention drawn to this or to his funding of the lab is that ultimately he would have culpability," Paul said in a Fox News interview.

"There's a responsibility – because for years he had advocated for gain-of-function research. He's even quoted as saying in 2012, if a pandemic should occur, if a scientist should be bitten by an animal and the virus gets out of the lab, it would be worth the knowledge," Paul added.

The Senator continued, "***Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins and others orchestrated a cover-up.*** There are emails between [former National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Dr. Francis] Collins and Dr. Fauci in which Dr. Collins says this wouldn't be good for China, this wouldn't be good for science – meaning that it wouldn't be good for the business of science, for the money that changes hands."

“There’s so much going on here. And when the American public finally finds out, I mean, there’s going to be such dissatisfaction in this country like you can’t believe,” the Senator further urged.

“For example, we know that the NIH gave money to American universities who then gave it to military researchers … with the title of general and colonel in the [Chinese] People’s Liberation Army,” Paul added.

Paul also spoke about the involvement of Peter Daszak who received funding through EcoHealth Alliance.

“***[T]he money definitely went to gain-of-function research.*** They would take a known SARS virus – this is the backbone or the original SARS from 2003 and 2004 – they would go to bat caves eight or 10 hours away, find new viruses, take the S-protein off and merge them into brand-new viruses never before found in nature,” Paul said.

The Senator added that Fauci will likely be considered a “hostile witness” when he is called to testify again before the new Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic.

“Fauci can remember all the mandates. He wants to tell you how to wear four masks. He can remember everything, but he can’t recall anything he did with setting up that first journal article to justify the cover-up,” Paul said.

Watch:

In a further interview with Newsmax, Paul expanded on how Fauci pressured other scientists to steer away from the lab leak origin story.

“I think, his guilt and his fear of retribution, or his fear of culpability, led him to perhaps the most massive cover-up in modern medical history,” Paul stated.

Markets, government, censorship: Adidas To Cut Dividend 80% After Losing $1.3 Billion Severing Ties With Kanye West

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 08, 2023 - 01:45 PM

Adidas announced on Wednesday that it would **slash its dividend by 79%** because severing ties with "Yeezy" designer Kanye West has decimated earnings to the tune of $1.3 billion.

"2023 will be a transition year to build the base for 2024 and 2025," said Bjørn Gulden, who took over as Adidas's CEO in January, and promised to rebuild the company's reputation. "We need to reduce inventories and lower discounts. We can then start to build a profitable business again in 2024."

As *FT* notes, Gulden is disinclined to burn the shoes *or* give them away, both of which would entail a €500mn write-off. Instead, he suggested selling the trainers and donating the profits to charity.

Backing out Yeezy's operating profit in 2021 suggests Adidas is starting from margins in mid-single digits. The current year should be one of transition. Dispiritingly, guidance points to negative sales growth as the company pushes inventory out of the door. -FT

"We will bring it back to be the best sports brand in the world once again," he added.

"Wartime Scenario" Unfolds As Taiwan Suspects Chinese Ships Cut Undersea Internet Cables

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 08, 2023 - 01:05 PM

According to Taiwanese authorities, on Feb. 2, a Chinese fishing boat damaged an undersea communications cable that connects Taiwan's main island to Matsu Islands. About one week later, a Chinese cargo ship severed another cable.

Located approximately 30 miles off the coast of China, the tiny island of Dongyin has quickly established a backup communication system, as reported by the WSJ. The new system uses a high-powered microwave radio to transmit data

to Taipei. WSJ described the disruption as a "wartime scenario" and "in a potential preview of a Chinese attack."

Taiwan has a network of fourteen undersea fiber-optic cables, some buried as shallow as 6 feet below the seabed. These cables are critical as they provide 95% of the island's data-and-voice traffic.

If Western military planners learned anything from the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia made a considerable effort to severe internet infrastructure in the Eastern European country in the early days of the war.

The Ukraine war has demonstrated how vital the internet can be to a smaller country facing invasion, for both mustering global support and coordinating resistance. If China were to cut Taiwan's cables, most of the island would be thrown offline, leaving it vulnerable. --WSJ

The loss of internet across the Matsu Islands has alerted Taiwan to the potential national security threat posed by Beijing, which considers the island nation part of China and has expressed intentions to take control of it.

WSJ said no evidence so far supports Beijing intentionally cut Matsu Island's internet. Taiwanese officials have theorized that illegal Chinese sand dredging around the tiny island exposed the cables and allowed for accidental damage by vessels.

However, Taiwanese lawmakers warn:

"If an internet outage can happen on Matsu, the same could happen in Taiwan," said Wen Lii, director of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party in Matsu's Lienchiang county.

And there's good news for Taiwan -- just like Ukraine -- satellite-based internet service Starlink offered by Elon Musk's SpaceX provides high-speed internet that neither Russia nor China can fully disrupt.

Energy, war:

Russians Claim Control Over Bakhmut's East

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 08, 2023 - 11:00 AM

According to Reuters, the head of Russia's Wagner mercenary group said on Wednesday his forces had taken full control of the eastern part of the Ukrainian city of Bakhmut as one of the bloodiest battles of the year-long war appears close to ending. If the claim is true, it would mean Russian forces control nearly half the city in their push to secure their first big victory in several months.

The General Staff of the Ukraine's Armed Forces said in its Wednesday morning report: "The enemy, despite significant losses, ... continues to storm the town of Bakhmut."

Wagner head Yevgeny Prigozhin said his fighters, who have been spearheading the Russian campaign to seize Bakhmut, had now captured the city's east. "Everything east of the Bakhmutka River is completely under the control of Wagner," Prigozhin said on Telegram.

"Coordinated Media Hoax Campaign" - Russia Blasts NYTimes Report On Nord Stream "Monstrous Crime"

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 08, 2023 - 10:19 AM

As a reminder, last month, Pulitzer prize winning journalist Seymour Hersh concluded that the **United States blew up the Russia-to-Germany Nord Stream natural gas pipelines** last September as part of a covert operation under the guise of the BALTOPS 22 NATO exercise.

Yesterday, four weeks after Hersh's bombshell report, anonymous US intelligence officials told the *NY Times* that **the saboteurs are likely "pro-Ukraine, possibly government-trained Ukrainian or Russian nationals, or some combination of the two,"** but that "**no American or British nationals were involved.**"

Stats, markets, government:

VC Funds See "Mass Extinction Event" For Startups In 2023: "It Will Make The Financial Crisis Look Quaint"

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 08, 2023 - 07:55 AM

Leading venture capital players are predicting a “mass extinction event” for early- and mid-stage startups that will make the global fiscal collapse in 2008 “look quaint” by comparison. According to Globest, a new survey has found that **81% of early-stage startups are facing a failure in 2023 because—as of the end of October—they had less than 12 months of capital left**

to keep going because VC funds turned the spigot off last year on a flood of seed funding.

An international survey of 450 startup founders in the US and Europe was conducted between August and October 2022 by research firm January Ventures, with 61% of respondents from the US and 32% from Europe. The founders who participated in the survey also were categorized by the level of funding for the startup: 48% of respondents said they had raised pre-seed funding, 32% said they had raised seed funding and 16% hadn't started raising funding.

The **survey found that four out of five startups are at risk of failure this year**, with less than 12 months of "runway" left—defined as "enough capital to keep the lights on" (in the dot.com era they called this a "burn rate," a reference to the amount of VC capital a startup was burning through before generating any revenue).

The Widening War: How The Nato-Russia Confrontation Is Playing Out In North Africa

BY TYLER DURDEN
WEDNESDAY, MAR 08, 2023 - 03:00 AM

Authored by Conor Gallagher via NakedCapitalism.com,

Western officials are now openly admitting the war against Russia (and China) is worldwide and composed of competing blocs...